

# SCENARIOS

A scenario is simply a narrative or story incorporating a series of events that we imagine happening in the future. It creates a picture of a potential future frozen at some point in time. Since for most situations in which scenarios are used, the future is unclear, or multiple futures are possible, multiple scenarios are written around projections of several different series of events.

What does a scenario do for us? It allows us to make better decisions by becoming aware of potential problems that could develop, or it gives us a chance to realize a tremendous opportunity. A scenario can mobilize people -- get them involved in assessing a situation and planning action. People tend to become more involved when they are presented with a concrete choice. It allows people to think about outcomes and consequences.

The process of building a set of scenarios assists decision makers in many ways, for instance by identifying major gaps in knowledge that must be filled. The finished scenario is there for anyone to see what potentially could happen. This allows anyone to explore the various possibilities of the future and effectively arrive at better decisions.

Scenarios allow cost-benefit analysis -- helping the decision maker to select among alternatives by comparing the alternatives according to their cost, effectiveness, and risk. They allow for exploring the future through rational and practical methods. The results are presented in a concrete manner that is easily understood.

The techniques of creating scenarios allow creativity and thoroughness in thinking about the future. It can provide a structure and stimulate both thinking and understanding about possibilities. Choices are presented and, through discussion, clarity about the future can be developed. Perhaps ordinarily, we do not want to bother with analyzing our choices so carefully. But when we want to make very important decisions concerning our future, scenarios provide the appropriate avenue for looking at very complex issues. As we think about the situation with scenarios, we can decide on better goals.

Scenarios provide structure to help us learn about the future by studying something similar but easier to deal with -- a model. The result of efforts can increase the effectiveness of policy and planning.

---

## AUTHORS

---

Donna Prestwood and Paul Schumann are cofounders of Glocal Vantage, Inc., a business and economic development consulting firm.

---

**GLOCAL VANTAGE, INC., PO BOX 26947, AUSTIN, TX 78755-0947 USA**  
**(512) 302-1935**  
**WWW.GLOCALVANTAGE.COM**  
**INFO@GLOCALVANTAGE.COM**

---